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EFFECTIVE FUNCTIONING OF HUMAN RIGHTS MECHANISMS

TREATY BODIES

Report of the Secretary-General on the consultations conducted in respect of the report of the independent expert on enhancing the long-term effectiveness of the United Nations human rights treaty system

Addendum

Additional comments received on the recommendations of the independent expert

1. The Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) transmitted its comments on the final report of the independent expert on enhancing the long-term effectiveness of the United Nations human rights treaty system, which were requested pursuant to resolution 1998/27 of the Commission on Human Rights and resolution 53/138 of the General Assembly, in a letter addressed to the Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights dated 10 December 1999. The present report contains a summary of the response from FAO and should be read together with the main report containing the comments received (E/CN.4/2000/98). The following comments correspond to section II.K of the main report, entitled "Cooperation with the specialized agencies and other bodies".

2. FAO indicated that it could provide assistance to OHCHR and the treaty bodies by providing information that would be useful in the monitoring process. Such information should be shared on a routine basis between the relevant offices, attention being paid to ensuring that the most relevant information reaches the right recipients and does not lead to information overload.

FAO was prepared to be a serious partner in developing feasible approaches to the right to food, to achieving food and nutrition security, and to collaborating actively with OHCHR, particularly in view of the possibility that lessons drawn from the right to food may be useful in dealing with other economic, social and cultural rights.

3. FAO considered it important that the normative advances made in recent years in relation to the right to food be fully drawn upon. It cited in this regard General Comment No. 12 on the right to adequate food of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, in the elaboration of which FAO had been actively involved. FAO believed that future reviews of the implementation of that right should be based on the structure of the General Comment, which provided a comprehensive overview of the elements comprising the content of the right to food, as well as a broad typology of State obligations to fulfil them. The General Comment also provided a framework for the selection of relevant data, which the treaty bodies would then be able to use in their review of State party reports. Where information was lacking, the constructive dialogue between treaty bodies and States parties could lead to requests for specific assistance from the technical agencies aimed at enabling States to fill the information gaps and thereby begin to make progress in the realization of that right.

4. FAO agreed on the need, over the longer term, to rethink the effectiveness of the human rights treaty system. Innovative mechanisms such as the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, Common Country Assessments and the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) Network on Food Security and Rural Development could serve to improve the quality of the national reporting process and help donor countries make that process more meaningful. FAO indicated its willingness to pursue technical discussions on the matter within the ACC Sub-Committee on Nutrition, where the issues of the provision of food and nutrition-related data from the wider United Nations system and their relevance to human rights monitoring had repeatedly been raised in recent years.

5. While expressing interest in participating in a senior-level meeting between the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the specialized agencies, FAO considered it urgent that a system of responding to requests from the treaty bodies and OHCHR for country information be established, to enable informed interaction between food security experts and members of the Committee. In that regard, FAO proposed the holding of a two-day meeting at FAO Headquarters with members of the Committee, the OHCHR secretariat, and technical and legal focal points in FAO and in the FAO liaison office in Geneva. Such a meeting would aim at facilitating practical discussion on information requirements and at working out concrete modalities for strengthening cooperation between FAO and the Committee on a continuing basis.